DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 160 916 CG 012 846

AUTHOR McCutcheon, Lynn E.; Richter, Eugene H.
TITLE Competence and Sex Prejudice--Is the Latter Disappearing?
PUB DATE [77]
NOTE 8p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Bias; College Students; *Females; *Males; Research Projects; Self Concept; *Sex Differences; Sex Discrimination; *Sex Stereotypes; *Student Attitudes

ABSTRACT

Male (N=80) and female (N=80) subjects who were matched for age and GPA were presented with either a competently or incompetently worded version of a 750-word excerpt from a journal article. The article was attributed to either Joan or John Maxwell. Subjects rated each article on scales for: professional competence of the author; writing style; ability to convince the reader. Separate 2 x 2 x 2 factorial analyses of variance were applied to responses on each scale. There were no significant effects for professional competence of author; there was a marginally significant effect indicating that the competent version of the article was better styled. All three main effects were significant on the third scale, ability to convince the reader. Thus, the competent version of the excerpt was seen as more convincing, Joan Maxwell was rated as more convincing than John, and females gave lower ratings than males. None of the interactions were significant. Results suggest that females are no longer prejudiced against themselves, and anti-female prejudice is declining among college males. (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 160916

COMPETENCE AND SEX PREJUDICE- IS THE LATTER DISAPPEARING?

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L E McCutcheon

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Lynn E. McCutcheon and Eugene H. Fichter

Northern Virginia Community College

Running Head: Competence and sex prejudice

CG 012846

Abstract

Male (N=80) and female (N=80) subjects who were matched for age and GPA were presented with either a competently or incompetently worded version of a 750 word excerpt from a journal article. The article was attributed to either Joan or John Maxwell. Subjects rated each article on scales for: professional competence of the author; writing style; ability to convince the reader. Separate 2 x 2 x 2 factorial analyses of variance were applied to responses on each scale. There were no significant effects for professional competence of author; there was a marginally significant ($p<.06$) effect indicating that the competent version of the article was better styled. All three main effects were significant on the third scale, ability to convince the reader. Thus, the competent version of the excerpt was seen as more convincing, Joan Maxwell was rated as more convincing than John, and females gave lower ratings than males. None of the interactions were significant. Results suggest that females are no longer prejudiced against themselves, and anti-female prejudice is declining among college males.

Competence and Sex Prejudice- Is the Latter Disappearing?

In a widely-publicized article Goldberg reported findings showing that women were prejudiced against women (1968). His data clearly demonstrated that college women had a more positive evaluation of articles allegedly written by males representing six professions than the same articles attributed to female authors.

Since then there have been several attempts to replicate the study and explain the conditions that cause women to devalue female performance. One such study extended the original findings to include adolescents of both sexes (Etaugh & Rose,1975). Another (Pheterson, Kiesler, & Goldberg, 1971) showed that female college students rated paintings attributed to male art-contest entrants more favorably than the same paintings attributed to female entrants. However, when subjects were told that the artists had been awarded prizes, they rated males and females equally. The authors concluded that anti-female prejudice shown by women is likely to occur only when there is ambiguity concerning the competency of the women to be judged. There are striking parallels between this study and one which found that competent females are generally liked more than incompetent females (Spence & Helmreich,1972), and another in which it was shown that competent black major league baseball players are not discriminated against as much as marginal black players (Rosenblatt, 1967).

Not all of the replications have confirmed the results of the Goldberg study. Pheterson[1] found no sex bias in a group of middle-aged uneducated women. Mischel (1974) found no unidirectional sex bias, but instead a general preference for authors whose sex was the same as that strongly associated with the professional field in which the article was written. Thus, male authors were preferred for articles on city planning while females were preferred for dietetics. The results of still another replication showed no sex bias in study 1, and a tendency, in study 2, for females to be prejudiced in favor of females (Levenson, Burford, Bonno, & Davis, 1975). The authors suggested that the difference between their results and those of Goldberg may reflect "the growing impact of women's liberation with its emphasis on the abilities and accomplishments of women" (p.70). Morris[2] also found that women gave higher ratings to articles written by women.

Are women still prejudiced against women as the Goldberg study showed, or has the women's movement wiped out or even reversed this trend, as the Levenson, et. al.study showed? If the former is true, does it apply to all women or only to those who are incompetent? And what about males? Are they still prejudiced against females as the study by Etaugh and Rose suggests, or has the continuing impact of the women's movement reduced anti-female prejudice among males? The present study was designed to test the wide divergence in hypotheses and research results, and provide answers to these questions.

1 Pheterson,G.I. Female prejudice against men. Unpublished manuscript, Connecticut College, 1969.

2 Morris,M.B. Anti-feminism: some discordant data. Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the Pacific Sociological Association,1970.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were 160 students from ten sections of introductory psychology courses taught by the experimenters. They were loosely matched on age and reported grade point average and were chosen from an original subject pool of 191.

Experimental Design

There were three independent variables constituting a 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design. These variables were competence of the written excerpt, sex of the fictitious author, and sex of the subject. The competent version of the excerpt appeared exactly as it had in the journal article (Derr, 1971). The incompetent version was exactly like the competent version except that it contained 18 spelling errors, six punctuation mistakes, and 13 word substitutions. The latter were intended to make the excerpt appear awkward. For example, in one of these substitutions a sentence was made to read " These facts are true facts," instead of the original " These facts are incontestable." Four groups of 20 females and four groups of 20 males saw either a competent or incompetent excerpt attributed to either John A. Maxwell or Joan A. Maxwell.

There were three of these 2 x 2 x 2 problems; one for each of three dependent variables. These were ratings of: (1) the professional competence of the author; (2) the author's writing style; and (3) ability to convince the reader about the correctness of the author's views.

Procedure

A few minutes were allotted in a regular class meeting for students to fill out a personal data sheet. Information provided by this sheet made possible the matching. Three weeks later the students were asked to evaluate a 750- word excerpt from an article attributed to a fictitious author, either John A. Maxwell or Joan A. Maxwell. The excerpt was actually from an article on educational philosophy (Derr, 1972). The article was chosen because it represented a professional field that has not been traditionally reserved for either males or females.

The instructions were similar to those used by Mischel (1974) and were as follows:

> You will find an excerpt from an article written by an author who is probably unknown to you. Please read it very carefully. The excerpt has been copied below exactly as it appeared in its original source. Any errors or failures to communicate clearly are therefore the failures of the author and not the typist. At the end of the article you will find some questions. Please answer these questions without consulting anyone seated near you. You are not presumeed to be sophisticated or knowledgeable about the subject matter. We are interested in the ability of college students to make critical evaluations.

Three rating scales were found at the end of the article. These were the same for all subjects, except of course for the references to sex of the author in the third scale.

1. On the basis of what you have just read how would you rate the professional competence of the author? Please indicate by placing a mark on the rating scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
(highly favorable)				(highly unfavorable)

2. On the basis of what you have just read how would you rate the writing style of the author? Please indicate by placing a mark on the rating scale below.

1 2 3 4 5
(highly favorable) (highly unfavorable)

3. On the basis of what you have just read how would you rate the author on her (his) ability to convince the reader that the position she (he) has taken on this issue is the correct one? Please indicate by placing a mark on the rating scale below.

1 2 3 4 5
(highly favorable) (highly unfavorable)

Results

Responses on all three scales were individually subjected to analysis of variance. The results for the first scale, professional competence, showed no significant main effects and no significant interactions. Results for the second scale, writing style, revealed a marginally significant main effect for author competence, F (1/152)= 3.91, $p < .06$. The competent version was evaluated more favorably. None of the other main effects or interactions even approached significance. Results for the third scale, ability to convince the reader, produced significant F values for all three main effects. Thus, the competent version of the excerpt was rated as more convincing than the incompetent version, F (1/152) = 7.18, $p < .01$. The female author, Joan A. Maxwell, was rated as more convincing than her male counterpart, F (1/152) = 4.92, $p < .05$. Female subjects gave lower favorability ratings than male subjects, F (1/152)= 5.77, $p < .025$. None of the interactions approached significance.

Discussion

Perhaps the most puzzling aspect of the study is the marked contrast between the results of problems one and two, on the one hand, and problem three, on the other. Particularly discouraging is the inability on the part of some college students to discriminate between competent and incompentent writing, at least in the first two problems. This finding lends general support to the frequently heard argument that college students are lacking in communication skills. Perhaps the significant main effect in problem three for sex of author can be partially attributed to the fact that, unlike problems one and two, it calls attention to the author's sex. The significant sex of subject effect in problem three may be partially attributable to female superiority in verbal skills (see Weitz, 1977, p. 104). Perhaps females are more sensitive to good writing and were therefore less impressed with the quality of the fictitious author's argument. On the other hand, it is unclear why significant sex of subject differences did not show up on the first two problems.

Fortunately, the results lend themselves to a reasonably straight forward interpretation of the issues posed earlier. The absence of any sex x competence interactions rules against the competence hypothesis. The absence of any sex of author x sex of subject interactions coupled with the main effect favoring females in problem three tends to support the findings of Levenson, et. al., (1975). To summarize, the results of the present study suggest that at least among college women, anti-female prejudice has largely disappeared. Furthermore, the level of anti-female prejudice

shown by college males in the present study appears to be much lower than reports in the popular press would lead us to expect. One recent study has shown that anti-female prejudice is more likely to occur among males when they expect to interact with competent females (Hagen & Kahn, 1976). Since males in the present study were not led to expect interaction with Joan A. Maxwell, the experimental design does not rule out the possibility that under some conditions males might show prejudicial attitudes against females.

References

Derr, R.L. School purposes as modes of adaptation. The Educational Forum, 1972, 37, 83-87.

Etaugh, C., & Rose, S. Adolescents' sex bias in the evaluation of performance. Developmental Psychology, 1975, 11, 663-664.

Goldberg, P. Are women prejudiced against women? Trans-Action, 1968, 5, 28-30.

Hagen, R., & Kahn, A. Discrimination against competent women. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 1976, 5, 362-376.

Levenson, H., Burford, B., Bonno, B., & Davis, L. Are women still prejudiced against women? A replication and extension of Goldberg's study. The Journal of Psychology, 1975, 89, 67-71.

Mischel, H. N. Sex bias in the evaluation of professional achievements. Journal of Educational Psychology, 1974, 66, 157-166.

Pheterson, G. I., Kiesler, S. B., & Goldberg, P.A. Evaluations of the performance of women as a function of their sex, achievement, and personal history. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1971, 19. 114-118.

Rosenblatt, A. Negroes in baseball: The failure of success. Trans-Action, 1967, 4, 51-53.

Spence, J.T., & Helmreich, R. Who likes competent women? Competence, sex-role congruence of interests, and subjects' attitudes toward women as determinants of interpersonal attraction. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 1972, 2, 197-213.

Spence, J.T., Helmreich, R., & Stapp, J. A short version of the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS). Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society, 1973, 2, 219-220.

Weitz, S. Sex roles. New York: Oxford Press, 1977.